

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIEP-02 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /113 W

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R 021142Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4739

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10817

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, PINS, TH, MY

SUBJECT: FOCUS ON THE SOUTH

REF: A. BANGKOK 8085

B. BANGKOK 10150

C. FBIS D011115Z JUL 74

D. BANGKOK 8086

E. FBIS D151108Z JUN 74

F. FBIS D261532Z JUN 74

SUMMARY: THE BANGKOK PRESS HAS CONTINUED TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH. THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN KUALA LUMPUR AND THE INDISCREET REMARKS OF MALAYSIAN LAND MINISTER MUHAMMED ASRI HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS HEAVY PRESS INTEREST. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO RELY FOR SOLUTIONS ON MAJOR GENERAL SAN CHITPATIMA, COMMANDER OF THE FIFTH MILITARY CIRCLE, WHO SEEMS TO BE UNFOLDING PLANS HE MENTIONED TO US IN MAY. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE THAI AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS HAS RECENTLY GIVEN

BROAD COVERAGE TO EVENTS IN SOUTH THAILAND. MUCH OF THIS PUBLICITY HIGHLIGHTS THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH WITHOUT REALLY DISCLOSING ANY NEW TURN OF EVENTS. THE SECURITY SITUATION IS SIMILAR TO THAT IN MAY AS WE DESCRIBED IN REF A.

2. THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN KUALA LUMPUR AND THE INDISCREET REMARKS OF MALAYSIAN MINISTER MUHAMMED ASRI HAVE ALSO FOCUSED PRESS ATTENTION ON THE MALAY/MUSLIMS IN THE SOUTH. STUDENTS IN BANGKOK AND THE SOUTH HAVE PROTESTED ASRI'S SEEMING SUPPORT FOR MALAY SEPARATISM (REF B). DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN ACCOMPANIED THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ISLAMIC LEAGUE SHEIK HASSAN EL-TOHAMY ON A TOUR OF SOUTHERN THAILAND. NEWSPAPER REPORTS OF HIS COMMENTS TO MUSLIM LEADERS IN THE SOUTH WERE A MIXED BAG OF DENOUNCING SECESSIONIST ACTIVITIES AND CALLED FOR STRENGTHENING OF MUSLIM CUSTOMS (REF C).

3. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO RELY ON FIFTH MILITARY CIRCLE COMMANDER MAJOR GENERAL SAN CHITPATIMA TO HANDLE THE SOUTH AND ITS TEEMING BANDITS. SAN IS FOLLOWING PLANS HE EXPLAINED TO THE CONSUL IN SONGKHLA LAST MAY (REF D). HIGH RANKING RTG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, HAVE AFFIRMED THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY (REFS E AND F). SAN HAS PUBLICIZED HIS REINFORCEMENT OF MILITARY AND POLICE UNITS IN THE AREA. HE HAS LAUNCHED A DEFAMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST FOLK-HERO AND BANDIT PHO SU. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE "THE NATION", FOR EXAMPLE, RAN A SERIES OF FIVE ARTICLES ON THE SOUTH IN LATE MAY AND EARLY JUNE, ALL OF WHICH CONTAIN CRITICISMS OF PHO SU.

4. THE CONSUL HAS RECENTLY RETURNED TO SONGKHLA, AND WE SHOULD BE RECEIVING MORE DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF EVENTS IN THE SOUTH.

5. COMMENT: THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH HAD BEEN SLOWLY DETERIORATING BEFORE THE NEWSPAPERS FOCUSED THEIR ATTENTION ON THE AREA. THERE ARE SIGNS, HOWEVER, THAT THE RTG WILL PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE SENSITIVITIES OF

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THE SOUTH. THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTEDLY HAS ORDERED THAT BUDDHA STATUES AT HOSPITALS SHOULD BE PLACED IN MORE DISCREET CORNERS AND THAT MALAY PATIENTS SHOULD RECEIVE THE FOOD THAT THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO. A FORMER UNITED THAI PEOPLES' PARTY PARLIAMENTARIAN FROM SATUN RECENTLY TOLD US THAT THAI OFFICIALS IN THE SOUTH WERE WATCHING THEIR ACTIONS SINCE LUANG ATTHASIT SITTHISUNTHON BECAME MINISTER OF INTERIOR.

KINTNER

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